

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

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A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the
old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers

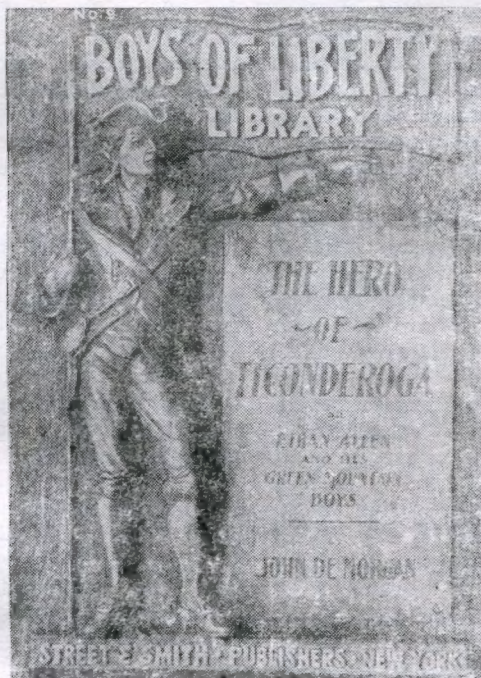
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The Dime Novel Detective and His Elusive Trail TWENTY YEARS OF DIME NOVEL RESEARCH

By J. Randolph Cox



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES #216

BOYS OF LIBERTY LIBRARY

Publisher: Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York, N. Y. Issues: 29.
Dates: Feb. 17, 1904 to Aug. 31, 1904. Schedule: Weekly. Price: 10c. Size:
7¼x5". Pages: 200 to 250. Illustrations: Designed pictorial cover common
to all issues. Contents: Stories of the American Revolution. NOTE. A cloth
bound edition was issued by David McKay with added titles to a total of 35.

The Dime Novel Detective and His Elusive Trail

TWENTY YEARS OF DIME NOVEL RESEARCH

By J. Randolph Cox

I don't recall precisely when I first heard the name of Nick Carter, but it may well have been in the Spring of 1944. I have vivid memories of turning on the radio each Sunday afternoon to listen to The Shadow, True Detective Mysteries, and Nick Carter, Master Detective all on the Mutual Broadcasting System. Lying in bed during an illness in the Autumn of that same year, I tried the radio dial one afternoon and discovered a children's daytime serial, a spin-off from the Nick Carter show called Chick Carter—Boy Detective.

Ten years passed. September 1954. I acquired my first real Nick Carter Dime Novel from a New York used bookstore: New Magnet Library No. 1305, THE TURN OF A CARD; OR, NICK CARTER PLAYS A SKILLFUL GAME. A relatively late story, copyrighted 1911, published in this edition in early 1931, one of the last written by the chief writer on the series, Fred-eric Van Rensselaer Dey.

In college I chose Nick Carter as my subject for my freshman English term paper. Armed with a dozen novels and a few of the basic secondary sources (including Russell Coryell's nostalgic piece on his father, John R. Coryell, the creator of Nick Carter) I wrote a short historical survey of the Nick Carter series from Dime Novel to Radio Series. So caught up in my research, I turned in the paper fully two weeks early and nearly failed an examination in the same course due to my misplaced priorities.

A decade later (1964) the acquisition of Robert Clurman's collection of the early stories, NICK CARTER, DETECTIVE, set me on the path of the Higher Scholarship in this field. The six stories chosen for the collection covered the years 1891 to 1902, a fair sampling. The introduction, however, was less than satisfactory. Apparently working solely from secondary sources, Clurman, a writer for the New York Times, managed to include nearly every mistaken statement ever made about Nick Carter in those brief eight pages.

I was appalled. Then and there I determined to do a definitive study of the Nick Carter phenomenon and "set the record straight," so to speak. Had I recalled what Albert Johannsen had written about his study of Beadle and Adams, I might not have been so confident. In the Preface to THE HOUSE OF BEADLE & ADAMS he confessed:

In the Autumn of 1933, the author rashly conceived the idea of writing a bibliography of the publications of Beadle and Adams . . . Seeing what a Gargantuan task lay ahead, the author should have known better than to continue . . . as the book progressed, it outgrew the

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original plan of a simple bibliography.

It would be nice to be able to say that I went to my desk at once and began to make notes on 3x5 cards from materials in my own collection. It would be nice to be able to say that I began the project with a well-defined methodology. No, it took months and years of trial and error and error and trial (and more error) before I arrived at a method that worked. Then, when all was done, the computer was invented and I learned that, had I waited a few years, I might have saved myself no end of time and effort.

It might not have been as much fun though.

Scarcely anyone would attempt a study of the Dime Novel from a literary point of view, but there are still some literary matters which need to be addressed. Certain basic facts need to be established, such as Authorship, the publishing history, the historical context, of the stories, before we can proceed to matters of interpretation. With a series as lengthy as the Nick Carter stories ways had to be found to break it up into manageable sections. This proved to be no problem. As I became more familiar with the stories, natural divisions became apparent: grouping the stories according to author, by recurring villains (the Dr. Quartz stories form a natural subdivision), or by series within the series (the Detective School series for example).

AUTHORSHIP. This is not easily established in the Dime Novel due to the heavy reliance on pseudonyms and house names. In the instance of Nick Carter there was a certain body of tradition which linked particular writers to the series. With the aid of the records of the Street & Smith Publishing Co., I was able to establish the authorship of at least 90% of the stories. As I read the stories it became apparent that several authors were involved since the stories did not all treat the character of Nick Carter in the same way, nor was there a single point of view employed.

PUBLISHING HISTORY. This involved more than establishing when each specific title had been published. What had to be established was whether each title was the earliest appearance of that story in print, or if there were other appearances under other titles. It was conceivable that the same story had appeared several times over a period of 30 or 40 years: twice in the pages of the NICK CARTER LIBRARY, twice in the NICK CARTER WEEKLY, again in NICK CARTER STORIES, and at least twice in the paper-covered novel series, the MAGNET LIBRARY and the NEW MAGNET LIBRARY. The date of copyright given on the book was merely a clue at best.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT. What external factors at the time of writing may have been reflected in the story? Are there any special interests of the writer which have found a place in the story? Dime Novel writers wrote fast, against swiftly approaching deadlines, and ideas sometimes based on current events.

Examples: In October, 1892, the Dalton gang held up two banks at once in Coffeyville, Kansas. One month later, the NICK CARTER LIBRARY published the account of how Nick Carter and his assistant, Chick, were responsible for the defeat of the Daltons at Coffeyville. (NCL 67: The Dalton Gang Wiped Out; or, Nick Carter's Deadly Rifle. 12 Nov. 8192. Author: Edward Stratemeyer.)

The San Francisco Earthquake occurred April 18-19, 1906 and Nick Carter was there according to NCW 503: Nick Carter's Earthquake Clue; or, Amid Falling Walls in San Francisco. 18 August 1906. Author: Eugene T. Sawyer.

By not treating the Dime Novel as though it had been written in a vac-

uum, by recognizing the cultural context of the story, we can gain much from them as social documents of their time.

In working with any Dime Novel series it is important to have an accurate list of the titles within the series, preferably taken from the publications themselves. The lists of titles on the back pages of the publications may help, but should not be relied on exclusively. They aren't always complete and there is the risk of including "ghost titles" on your working checklist.

I began my work with Nick Carter with three advantages. The first was in my relationship with Conde Nast Publications, the successor to Street & Smith. They allowed me access to what remained of the Street & Smith Archives and provided me with a typed checklist of the titles of the majority of the Nick Carter stories arranged according to publication in which they had appeared: story paper, nickel weekly, and papercovered novels. There was even a list of the titles of the stories from the radio show.

Most of this information was transferred to 3x5 cards: main title, subtitle, exact date of publication (for this I worked with the actual publications), the number of the issue, and the chapter titles and opening lines of each story. For the papercovered novels (in the Magnet Library and New Magnet Library), I used 5x8 cards since there was more information to record—at least three times the number of chapter titles. I also included the number of pages and the copyright date for these. Each card had to contain enough information to enable me to establish the publishing history for each title.

One of Street & Smith's unwritten rules appears to have been: if a story is worth printing once, it is worth reprinting. When there is a shortage of new stories, run an old one. The rationale for this may have been economical; it's less expensive to use the plates for a story a second time than to pay for a new manuscript. Other publishers of Dime Novels followed somewhat the same policy.

From time to time in the Nick Carter series (especially in the nickel weeklies) there would be a period when every other story in the series would be a reprint. Sometimes they would be acknowledged as such ("reprinted by request"), but often they were not. The title might be the same, but often that was changed on the reprint, as would be the cover.

At least as early as 1904, the stories for the nickel weeklies were plotted in sequences of three. Each story was complete in itself, but the next story was related to it in some way. The villain revealed at the end of story one might escape in story two, while the rest of the gang would be tracked to justice in story three. The three stories could then be reissued with a minimum of editorial changes as one long work as a paper-covered novel in the Magnet or New Magnet Library to be discovered by a new generation of readers. Before 1904, the choice of stories to be grouped for such reissues appears to have been made with less forethought.

My second advantage was living within 50 miles of a University which had a large collection of Dime Novels, including most of the Nick Carter stories. Commencing in the Summer of 1967 (and continuing for several years to follow) I made frequent visits to the George Hess Collection to add more notes to several hundred 3x5 cards.

A third advantage was being an incurable collector myself. In addition to the files and publications at Conde Nast (later moved to the George Arents Research Library at Syracuse University) and the Hess Collection, I had the nucleus of a sizable Dime Novel collection of my own. Having my own copies of some of the publications made it possible for me to use my time in the

Rare Book Collections with greater efficiency.

And so I proceeded through the entire run of the NICK CARTER DETECTIVE LIBRARY (282 issues), the NICK CARTER WEEKLY (819 issues), and NICK CARTER STORIES (160 issues) . . . reading and skimming, stopping to take notes. I jotted down capsule summaries of some of the more interesting stories, noted where some stylistic change seemed to indicate a different author than the one who had written the previous story in the series, names of characters, points to look up later about the historical setting. There seemed to be two sorts of data being recorded: factual data to help establish the publishing history and subjective data to establish the story within a context.

When I worked on the Magnet and New Magnet Libraries, I made only one card for each title, although I carefully indicated on the card the number of the reissue when this was known. In the upper left hand corner of each 5x8 card I put the number of the original publication, in the upper right hand corner, the number of the reissue. For example, A KLONDIKE CLAIM was published on the 1st of September 1897 as No. 1 in the Magnet Library and reprinted in March 1916 as No. 925 of the New Magnet Library.

While the date of publication was printed somewhere on the cover of each book in 1897, this practice had been dropped by 1916. To determine the date of actual publication (often different from the copyright date), it was necessary to create a chart based on the frequency of publication sometimes given in the advertisements for the series.

The reprinting patterns with specific examples had been included in some of the articles in the files of the Dime Novel Roundup, so I began by verifying these. It wasn't necessary in every case to run each 3x5 card past the 5x8 cards, matching chapter titles and opening lines in order to determine which numbers of the Nick Carter Weekly had been used in a specific New Magnet Library. The scholars of the Roundup had paved the way. In the instance of A KLONDIKE CLAIM, the first 4 numbers of the Nick Carter Weekly had been used. I marked the initials NCW and the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 in the lower right hand corner of the file card for Magnet Library number 1. I then pulled the first 4 cards from the Nick Carter Weekly file and made a cross reference to the Magnet Library on these cards. Each card was then refiled in a new category which I called "Established Reprint Patterns." Gradually, this file grew, leaving fewer cards which needed to be scanned for textual comparisons.

What made this task particularly challenging was the fact that the reprinting pattern was not limited to a simple one of one Nick Carter series having been used to create a second one. So great was the need for material that stories from other series to which the publisher had the rights were cannibalized for inclusion in one or more Nick Carter publications. Some of this had been discussed in the Dime Novel Roundup so I had some basis on which to begin searching. My files of 3x5 cards were expanded to include the Old Broadbrim Weekly, the Old Cap. Collier Library, the Shield Weekly, the Boston Globe, and the British Union Jack, to name a few.

To speed up the gathering of data on my visits to the Hess Collection and the Library at Syracuse University I began taking a small tape recorder with me, reading the data onto tape to be transferred to cards later. Today much of this could be done with the assistance of the computer, but I was working in the pre-computer age. I didn't feel I needed a system as complex as that used by Albert Johannsen for his work with Beadle & Adams. He had an alphabetical card index covering just the first lines of the stories.

Compared with Johannsen's task, mine was more limited in scope. Even so, I eventually had a file of cards which filled about six shoe-boxes which included data on the authors (at least birth and death dates) and which stories they had written when this could be determined.

A present I have two drawers of a filing cabinet filled with folders of material which won't easily fit onto 3x5 cards, including material on aspects of the Nick Carter phenomenon which are outside the Dime Novel era (the radio series, the comic books, television, editions other than American, and the current paperback thrillers). I gathered material on other Dime Novel publishers, on cheap paperback publishing in the 19th century, a complete file of the Dime Novel Roundup, scrapbooks for clippings, xeroxes of articles and even of stories which I could not acquire in their original form, there are tape recordings of the original radio shows, and cassettes of the texts of stories which would not withstand xeroxing. I replaced the original tape recorder with its 3 inch reels with a cassette recorder and preserved some of the more fragile texts in this form, read into a microphone in hushed tones by myself (but with suitable dramatic effect) in the Hess Collection or the Reading Room of the George Arents Research Library at Syracuse. I acquired a print of a 1920 silent film with Tom Carrigan portraying Nick Carter and found typescripts of a half dozen unpublished adventures. In a separate notebook I kept a sort of journal of my progress, including ideas to pursue and a sample of amusing passages from the stories.

Weeks and months and years of work with 3x5 cards and checklists and bibliographies and indexes and Dime Novels opened before me gave me an appreciation for the people who had labored before me to produce this brand of entertainment. Don't tell me that each Dime Novel is just like the next one! Does this story-teller refer to his hero as "Nick" while this one calls him just "Carter"? Pshaw! This can't be the work of the same man!

Much of the work was done at home, late into the night. I would go as far as I dared with my endless textual comparisons, go to my bedroom (fortunately next door to my study) so exhausted I couldn't sleep. More than once I would get up, turn on the light and return to my task.

Then in the Summer of 1977 (as I have described elsewhere), I found the handwritten records of Street & Smith which assigned dates of publication and authorship to the very material over which I had labored so long. It was simultaneously satisfying and deflating . . . something like working on a Dissertation and completing it only to learn that someone else had done the same work just before. More than anything else, this discovery served to verify what I had learned the hard way.

Since 1974, there have been 4 parts of the Complete Nick Carter Bibliography published as Supplements to the Dime Novel Roundup. At present I am working on the record of the MAGNET and NEW MAGNET LIBRARIES. This will be followed by listings of the radio scripts, comic books, and the motion picture and television adaptations. The final segment will be a complete index by title and author to the entire series. For this I will try to make use of the computer.

I am sometimes asked how many Nick Carter stories there are. The number depends on what you are counting. For years no one took notice of the fact that there were so many reprints. Excluding reprints, the radio scripts, and comic book stories, but including pulp stories as late as 1944, there were a total of 1,465 authentic adventures of Nick Carter.

A final question which someone is bound to ask: have I read them all? My answer: "Some of them more than once."

FRANK MERRIWELL'S RADIO ADVENTURES

Fred L. King

Interestingly, a few years ago when I asked my wife if she recalled from childhood the Frank Merriwell radio programs of the late 1940s, she immediately replied that she did indeed remember the clip-clop of the horse's hooves on the program's opening, though she recalled little else about the broadcasts. The opening was distinctive and memorable. Against a snappy march played on the usual organ of radio's themes, the sound of the trotting horse's hooves rang against the paved street and the announcer introduced the program, "There it is, an echo of the past, an exciting past, a romantic past. The era of the horse and carriage, gas-lit street and free-for-all football games. The era of one of the most beloved heroes in American fiction, Frank Merriwell, the famous character created by Gilbert Patten under the pen name Burt L. Standish. Merriwell is loved as much today as he ever was, and so the National Broadcasting Company brings him to radio in a brand new series of stories." What followed was always entertaining for kids, teenagers and adults alike.

Frank Merriwell's first radio appearance came earlier though. It was March, 1934, when the Monday, Wednesday and Friday 15 minute episodes were first broadcast sponsored by Dr. West's Toothpaste and announced by Harlow Wilcox. The program was a break for Gilbert Patten. Thirteen years before, he had broken with Street & Smith and had survived as a writer by free lancing in the pulp paper market. A trip to Hollywood had brought him nothing in motion picture writing, and an unsuccessful and costly venture into the publishing field undoubtedly had Patten anxious for more writing successes. Patten's first contract with the sponsors was for 13 weeks, with options for further 13-week broadcasts and two yearly options. In its first 13-week run, the program was an immediate success with youngsters and with their parents who recalled the character from days past. After a short summer vacation, there were plans for the return of the program in the fall. I am unable to learn when this series of programs ended, and, unfortunately, there seems to be no example of the program which has survived on transcription for old radio buffs to enjoy today. Reviews of the program at the time suggest that the radio scripts followed rather closely the flavor of the turn-of-the-century Merriwell stories but with some modernization, for example, adding telephones to Fardale.

The later 30-minute series of "The Adventures of Frank Merriwell" began on NBC October 5, 1946, with a script titled "The Riddle of the Wrong Answers" and continued as a presentation of NBC without sponsor until it left the air in 1949. At least 51 of the Saturday morning programs through June 4, 1949 exist in tape collections of old time radio aficionados.

From the start of the series, Lawson Zerbe played the title role. Zerbe was a very popular radio voice in the early 1940s because of his ability to play any character devised by a script writer, and in fact could and did play more than one character on a single broadcast by switching voices as called for. The tall, blondish young man played the part of Pepper Young on "Pepper Young's Family" for some time, and worked regularly on a number of programs such as "The Thin Man," "Bulldog Drummond" and "Inner Sanctum." When World War II came along, an army physician rejected Zerbe because of a bad heart and his own physician confirmed there was indeed a problem, advising him to take a rest from the busy rush of radio broadcasting. Instead, Zerbe joined the American Field Service to drive an ambulance. When he returned from overseas, his doctor found him in better physical con-

dition, but predicted he would worsen if he returned to ten-hour-a-day studio grinds. About this time, he married radio actress Doris McWhirt and she insisted he confine his radio work to reasonable hours. It was then that he was selected to play Frank Merriwell on the new series. Did Zerbe substitute the athletic adventures of Frank Merriwell in the radio scripts for athletics his own physical condition would not allow him? Perhaps so. Zerbe sounds as if he IS Frank Merriwell on the broadcasts, and fortunately for fans of the Merriwell character the scripts reflect turn-of-the-century living as it was in Patten's Tip Top Weekly stories. Telephones are few and horse-and-carriage is the usual mode of travel, though an occasional early automobile which will attain a speed of 25 miles per hour shows up. This makes the program a joy to hear for a Merriwell fan.

This later series of programs was scripted by Ruth and Gilbert Brann and Bill Welch. Mel Brandt was the announcer. The show was directed at different times by Ed King, Joseph Mansfield and Harry Junkin. Other actors and actresses included throughout most of the series were Harold (Hal) Studor as Bart Hodge, Elaine Rost as Inza Burrage and Patricia Hosley as Elsie Bellwood. Although Frank continued the life of a student at Yale, when the program gave away a scholarship to a high school student in a contest, it was the University of Colorado which provided the scholarship.

The radio program came at the right time to be popular. Television was only in its infancy and America still listened to the radio. Saturday mornings were magic times for children out of school to listen to such exciting programs as "The Adventurers' Club" with its wild tales of world exploration, and of course to "The Adventures of Frank Merriwell" with his exploits in college and his adventures off campus. And the programs were believable. During the summer of 1948, Frank and Bart were out of school for the summer and found employment as lifeguards at the Boardwalk in Atlantic, N. J., a situation appropriate for college students. Of course they spent more time solving mysteries than in rescuing drowning swimmers. Other programs in the radio series did reflect life at Yale with football games and gambling plots as well as frequent adventures in the surrounding community.

Most really popular fictional characters eventually have shown up in radio or television productions, sometimes with disastrous results. For example, readers of "The Hardy Boys" and "Nancy Drew" mystery books looked forward to television treatment which would allow enjoyment of the characters again for those who liked the books as children. When the television series appeared, however, the Hardy Boys needed haircuts and were playing rock music; the series did not endure. Fortunately for fans of the Frank Merriwell legend, the radio programs of the 1940s offered excellent treatment of the character with true reflection of Patten's image of the people and the times when the Merriwell material was written. The Merriwell radio program survived for three years until television replaced most radio dramatic programs of its type. It is unfortunate that a sustaining television series faithful to the original Merriwell stories did not appear.

GILBERT PATTEN'S THIRTEENS

Fred L. King

Gilbert Patten, author of the Merriwell stories and many other stories and novels, thought the number 13 to be especially lucky for him. There are 13 letters in his name and also in his pen name Burt L. Standish. He was 13 years old when he first had his work published, a poem in a country news-

paper, "The Corinna Owl" and that name has 13 letters. His first full year as a professional writer brought an income of thirteen hundred dollars. Not long after arriving in New York, Patten found a ten dollar bill and three ones, thirteen dollars. When no one claimed the money, Patten deposited the money in a savings account and added to it by deposits of 13 dollars or multiples thereof, and in a year he had thirteen hundred dollars in the account. He was twice thirteen or 26 when he left Beadle and Adams Publishers hoping to write something better than he had been writing. Patten attempted to start any new venture on the 13th of the month whenever possible (his second choice was a Friday). It was 13 years between the time he left Street and Smith and the time he received a contract to write a new Frank Merriwell radio program in March of 1934. The contract called for an initial 13 weeks of radio scripts, with options for an additional 13 weeks. When he made a trip to Hollywood in the early 1930s in an attempt to get into the motion picture business, he failed to find any success as a writer there. He admitted he had not started the trip on a 13th.

COL. CHARLES D. RANDOLPH

"BUCKSKIN BILL"—POET OF THE PLAINS

By Melvin Schulte

There was a note in a recent issue of the Roundup about the death of Buckskin Bill Randolph, the elderly dime novel enthusiast. Some of you may remember his poems and articles that were published in the Round-up as far back as 35 years ago.

Col. Randolph not only collected dime novels but they, along with western poetry and western frontiersmen were a big influence in his lifestyle. He dressed in western attire and acted the part of a westerner, bordering on being thought of as an eccentric (but aren't we all in some fashion).

I first heard of Randolph about three years ago when I got a copy of his privately printed 1925 booklet "Western Poems. by The Western Poet, Col. Chas. D. Randolph, "Buckskin Bill'." It would take a lot of imagination to call these verses "poems," but they indicated that he may have known Buffalo Bill and his contemporaries. Then a bookman who knew of my interest in Buffalo Bill offered me over 100 Buffalo Bill dime novels whose condition varied from very good to many which lacked covers. In lieu of covers some had sheets of paper attached with hand drawn and crayon colored titles and illustrations and with Randolph's name appearing on them. These dated from the Buffalo Bill Stories, number 38, Feb. 1, 1902 to the New Buffalo Bill issues of 1917.

Since my prime interest is collecting memorabilia of Buffalo Bill, I called a Davenport book dealer (Randolph's home town) and located a friend of the family. They both had the same story, that shortly after Randolph's death a couple of his grandsons ransacked the house and sold much of his collection. This dealer had bought some of this material, including about half of his dime novels which they had already resold to a dealer in one of the western states. They still had some of his photographs and books which I bought.

Later he called and offered me "half a grocery sack of Randolph's writings." These were 22 large old-fashioned composition books of about 150 to 300 pages each, all completely filled in Randolph's penciled script, and they clearly showed the influence that dime novels had on him. Seven of these were "The Biography of C. D. Randolph, by an Anonymous Author." These included the first and the last (#26) in this "biography" with scattered num-

bers between—someone else must have the other numbers.

The other 15 volumes are the "Lives, Exploits, and Adventures" of Idaho Bill, Pawnee Bill, Diamond Dick, Buckskin Johnnie, and Deadwood Dick. All are written in a similar style, a glorious mixture of biography, Randolph's poems, and excerpts from letters, newspaper articles and obituaries. Many of these excerpts are obviously "doctored up" on dime novel terminology or to include comments about Randolph himself. At least half of the contents of these books are dime novel type stories written by Randolph. It's a pity that all you true dime novel addicts do not have a chance to read them.

The format of all these "Lives and Exploits" are very similar. Each book is paginated, each bears the book number of that series, all are divided into chapters and have a list of contents, all have prefaces or introductions (sometimes both). A description of one set of books will describe them all.

The Pawnee Bill stories include four volumes, and each is titled in two colors of crayons—"Life, Exploits and Adventures of Pawnee Bill, Famous Frontiersman, Scout, Hunter-Trapper-Trader, Interpreter, Wild West Showman, Buffalo Rancher, Hero of Dime Novels, Guide and Guard, Last of the Oklahoma Boomers. Compiled and written by Col. Charles D. Randolph, Buckskin Bill, Poet of the Plains."

The second page is a dedication to a niece of Pawnee Bill, then a three-page Preface, followed by two pages of contents of the 13 chapters in this book #1. The other three books have similar title and front pages. The first book of 232 pages is mostly dime novel type stories.

The second book has 29 chapters. More of this is a biography, but it is impossible to tell where true biography ends and a wild dime novel story begins. The death and burial of Mrs. May Lillie as reported by many newspapers is given much space. The last forty pages lists "Books, dime and nickel novels about Pawnee Bill." He states that Pawnee Bill appears in 110 numbers in the last part of the Buffalo Bill Stories, and lists many of them by number and title. He also lists many published in the Far West Library, Beadles Boys Library, Nugget Library, New York Five Cent Library and the Wide Awake Library.

Book three continues listing dime novels "Biographies of Pawnee Bill's Pard of the Plains" in Beadles Dime Library, Beadles Popular Library, Campfire Library, Nugget Library, DeWitt's Ten Cent Romances, War Library and others. In this chapter he also lists "Buckskin Bill's Library" which includes ten of these "Life, Exploits and Adventures" by Randolph and also a Number 11, "Life, Exploits and Adventures of Buckskin Bill, C. D. Randolph, by William Wesley Giles. This is followed by many pages concerning Pawnee Bill's Wild West shows, poems attributed to many authors including himself, and a list of dime novels about Wild Bill Hickock. And finally the death of Pawnee Bill is reported by newspaper accounts, taking up about 60 pages and including more dime novel type additions and insertions.

Book four consists mostly of articles about Pawnee Bill's death and burial—Randolph's words. "The Epistles of Pawnee Bill as recorded by the press and arranged and written by Buckskin Bill. Here again dime novel fiction is interwoven with facts.

As an example of Randolph's style, these are quotes in his words from the last two paragraphs in book four—"Pawnee Bill was just one year older than Buckskin Bill's father. Thus in a preceding generation, and the last in that era of plainsmen, scouts, frontiersmen, dime novel heroes, and wild west showmen. Buckskin Bill naturally succeeds Major G. W. Lillie, Pawnee Bill, as 'The Last of the Scouts, Dime Novel Heroes and Wild West Showmen.'"

Buckskin Bill (the author) has lived to tell all of his "pards of the plains" pass on across "the great divide" into the "Happy Hunting Grounds," and to write their "Lives, Exploits and Adventures." Those he has written are as follows—California Joe, Captain Jack, Doc Carver, Deadwood Dick, Pawnee Bill, Idaho Bill and Diamond Dick. Buckskin Bill hopes someday to compile all of these into one book entitled "The Border Scouts in Buckskin." The end.

Randolph was born in Scott County, Iowa in 1888, and died in Davenport in 1984—nearly 96 years old. Although he called himself, Chief of Scouts, Pony Express Rider, etc. the closest he came to that type of occupation was seemingly as a Marshal "In the seventeen states of the wild west" (as he phrased it) long after the west and the Indians had been subdued—and later was a guard at the Rock Island Arsenal for some years.

He undoubtedly had met many of those old-timers that he wrote about. From his account of that 1927 reunion of the old showmen and western characters at the National Editors Convention in Norfolk, Nebraska, it seems plausible that he was there as a spectator at least, and if the excerpts from the letters he quotes are factual he had corresponded with several of them. He and his book of Western Poems are mentioned in Nolan's book "Three Plays by J. W. Capt. Jack Crawford."

Though many of his comments about his life and of the others be questioned, one thing seems certain—he loved and lived dime novels. And he probably was among the last to write hundreds and hundreds of pages (50 of these books) in typical old dime novel fashion even though they were never published. He certainly was one of the very early and very ardent dime novel collectors and enthusiasts.

SOME PUZZLING ALGER TRIVIA

By Stanley A. Pachon

A number of years ago I secured a sheet of Street & Smith's New York Weekly stationery. What makes this sheet interesting is the fact that in fine print in red ink on the left side of the sheet were given a list of 33 novels titled on top as "The Leading Novel Series." These were listed down from number 33 to number 1, all clothbound and priced at \$1.50 a copy, with the notation "For Sale Everywhere."

In checking the list of books against their serializations in the "New York Weekly," some of the titles were not listed there but one could assume correctly that they may have been changed for greater reader appeal. This series carried four Algers that had been serialized in the New York Weekly. These were.

#7 The Western Boy; #15 Tony the Hero; #16 Tom the Bootblack; #31 The Train Boy.

What is puzzling of this Alger list is why the same story offered under two separate titles? This "Leading Novel Series" also raises another question, was this an effort on the part of Street and Smith to enter the cloth bound book field? A field they tried to break into with very little success. Another possibility suggests itself that this was Street and Smith's publicity effort for books by different publishers to stimulate sales of the books from the New York Weekly serials. This last assumption appears to be the most logical since Carleton published The Western Boy, while Ogilvie, Tom, the Bootblack. I have never come across any of the "Leading Novel Series" and one wonders if this was a figment of Street and Smith's imagination.

The "Leading Novel" Series

33. A Women's Web, By Miss C. V. Maitland ----- \$1.50

32.	Beyond Pardon, By Bertha M. Clay	\$1.50
31.	The Train Boy, By Horatio Alger	\$1.25
30.	A Naughty Girl's Diary, By auth. of "A Bad Boy's Diary \$1.00; paper 50c	
29.	Queenie Hetherston, By Mary J. Holmes	\$1.50
28.	Love's Perils, By Bertha M. Clay	\$1.50
27.	Lost—A Pearle, By Mrs. Sheldon	\$1.50
26.	Struggle For A Ring, By Bertha M. Clay	\$1.50
25.	Earle Wayne's Nobility, By Mrs. Sheldon	\$1.50
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20.	The Forsaken Bride, By Mrs. Sheldon	\$1.50
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LETTERS

Dear Ed,

I read the book review on *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger Jr.* which Dr. Dizer wrote, and the letter to the Editor about that review by Dr. Scharnhorst.

The latter seems a bit surprising in view of the overall tone of the review. It is not half as savage as the response it evoked.

Dizer says "the book is a must for any serious" Alger fan. He refers

to "the really excellent research" of the authors and calls it "most readable and quite accurate." It is "well footnoted," "well organized," "continuity and balance . . . are excellent."

He does question some points, and expresses some opinions. It is this which draws Scharnhorst's fire.

Scharnhorst states that he read the review "with surprise and amazement," that it is "woefully apparent" that Dizer is not a biographer (like Scharnhorst). He is "aghast" and labels Dizer's words as "utter nonsense." He is very pleased with a review by Yardley and very displeased with the review by Dizer.

Reading both the review and the reply one has to feel that Scharnhorst is over-reacting. The book is his offspring, and Dizer's praise was not idolatrous enough.

One trouble with book reviews is that there is too much of the "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" stuff. If the reviewer does not shout 'Hasannah In the Highest' he should be expelled from the club. The use of aghast indicates Scharnhorst was struck with amazement. Surely an author should expect that not everyone will be in complete agreement with all that he writes.

Those of us who are not educators with advanced degrees and literary titles read these things and must wonder at them. I had to conclude that regardless of the merit or lack of it of the book, one of the writers is less polite than the other, and calmer and more balanced in his effusion.

Bob Chen

Dear friend,

To return to Frank Merriwell after a fifty-five year gap is quite an experience. The copy of Frank Merriwell's Loyalty sent to me by my friend, the Merriwell Buff, was, according to the fly-leaf insert, for a time the "property of Grace Reformed Sunday School." That started the flood of memories. I first encountered Frank Merriwell in OUR Sunday School library. The rule was only one book per week. The prospect of following Frank's adventures and exploits by checking out another of the series was undoubtedly one reason I was a faithful Sunday School attendant. I owned only two Merriwell volumes.

Frank was one of my idols. I dreamed of following him to Yale and winning a big Y for my sweater. Instead I ended as a townie, during the depression, at Muhlenberg and could win an M only by going out for cheer-leading. As hero, Frank superseded Tom Swift and the Rover Boys and competed with The Boy Allies (whose names I forget). Eventually Frank was dethroned by Altsheller's Henry Ware, and then I graduated to Zane Gray and Oliver Curwood, and on to H. G. Wells, and finally to Twain and Dickens.

What were my reactions to this new encounter—at age 69—with a Merriwell text and my memories. To oversimplify—as Burt L. was fond of doing in his writings—my response was a mixture of amazement and amusement.

Amazement. I was almost dumbfounded at discovering one new aspect of Frank's nature. Most vivid of all in my memory was Frank the super-athlete, far surpassing all nine letter men or Olympic decathlon winners. I remembered him well, too, as model, moral hero: non-smoking, non-drinking, yet tolerant and sympathetic to those who indulged, forgiving, selfless, daring. But Frank the prankster—this aspect had been washed clean of my memory. Perhaps it had never been firmly imprinted there. For the first time I began to suspect a link between Frank and Tom Sawyer.

My amazement, tinged with amusement, continued as I contemplated the

degree of violence and ferocity abounding in the account. Life at Yale University, such a warfare of rival gangs with the bad gang out to maim and destroy the guys of Frank's good gang? Shades of West Side story. I began to wonder how it was that I could ever have wished to enrol at Old Eli or considered it such an idyllic spot. Was my dream of ideal college life really the Standish version: drinking, fighting, horseplay, fighting, sports, fighting; bitter hatred, efforts at poisoning, etc.; stupid or vindictive professors? And no studying? The only reference to studying in this volume was to Frank's remarkable ability to study at the same time he was hosting a drinking party in his room. (Of course Frank did not drink.) Basically, I had always looked upon the Merriwell books as sport stories, teaching the importance of clean living, training, endurance, perseverance, good sportsmanship. What struck me, too, at this reading was the extent to which sport activities seemed—except of course for Frank and his little coterie—to bring out the worst in human nature—envy, vindictiveness, cruelty, cunning, snobbery. I wondered. Would boys, reading these books today see through my 12 year old eyes or my 69 year old eyes?

Then I began to wonder, was college in 1896 (copyright date for this volume) such an Animal House? If I was amazed at the difference in my perception of collegiate life, as suggested by this same book, a half century ago and today, I was even more amazed at the possibility that Burt L. Standish was a fairly decent educational sociologist, describing the reality of higher education in his own day with not too distorted a picture. Certainly his picture of life at Farwell and Yale does not stray too far from George Schmidt's chapter "Portrait of a Residential College" in his 1957 book, *The Liberal Arts College: A Chapter in American Cultural History*.

On to amusement. In 1924, when I was greedily inhaling Frank Merriwell, I would not have turned a hair at hearing some of Frank's righteous utterances which today strike me as unconscious racism and male chauvinism. Says Frank enthusiastically, "He is a white man for all his peculiar ideas." And again, in a moral lecture to May Blossom (what a wonderful name for this shrinking violet!):

A girl can be too independent. The girl who is too independent and forward may pass as a jolly good fellow among the boys, and they may regard her as good company, but the chances are that they will fall in love with the sweet clinging girl who requires their protection and the assistance of their strong arms . . . The fellow who kills a snake and laughs at the girl who is frightened by it feels far better satisfied than he would had the girl herself killed the snake. . . He may praise the girl who kills the snake for her nerve, but he will make love to the one who screamed and ran.

Amusing too were the touches (buckets full) of sentimentality, and the easy division of chapters into the good guys and the bad guys, with road maps to tell the reader which is which. Ah, the freshness of an earlier less cynical age (my own and the era's) when a manly hero could gush, "All the better part of my nature I owe to my dear mother." And when villains are easy to identify by the author's un-subtle clues: "muttered Billings," "snarled Rupert," "chuckled Gooch fiendishly," "said Sydney showing his white teeth."

Especially good for a chuckle after one of the five fights that Frank engages in within the course of a month or so, is his homily, "Fighting is low and vulgar, but there are times when a fellow must fight or play the coward." Frank seems perpetually to face this unhappy choice.

After all these somewhat snide comments, I must conclude by admitting

that, after 55 years, I kept turning the pages almost as eagerly as in adolescence, wanting to find out what was going to happen to Frank next, even though his victory over all was foregone. Gambling was a vice which Frank seemed to indulge in quite frequently (for good courses of course). Unlike my reading of "great" literature, one of the joys of reading Frank Merriwell is that I can feel comfortable placing my bets on or with Frank, confident that they will yield rich dividends.

John

A DIME NOVEL COLLECTORS BOOK SHELF

AN OLIVER OPTIC CHECKLIST. An Annotated Catalog-Index to the Series, Nonseries Stories and Magazine Publications of William Taylor Adams, compiled by Dolores Blythe Jones. Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Box 5007, Westport, Conn. 06881. \$29.95. An excellent listing of Optic's books, but information has been taken mainly from published sources. There are some Optic editions that appeared in dime novel format missing from the listings, but this should not lessen the book's value as a first check list published in cloth of this neglected American juvenile author.

NEWS NOTES

Dr. Fred L. King, back in 1979, compiled a "Jack Armstrong Scrapbook" containing a complete illustrated list of the radio premiums and other material associated with Jack Armstrong such as comic books, movie serials, etc. A must for listeners of the program during the golden age of radio. Dr. King may have a few left for sale. Write him at the Samaritan Memorial Hospital, Macon, Missouri 63552.

The American Popular Culture Association will have its annual conference at the Hilton in Atlanta, Georgia April 2 through 6, 1986. Lydia Godfrey, head of the dime novel segment has arranged a great program. All are invited to attend. The program with tentative date and time is as follows:

Street & Smith Publishing House and Its 50th Anniversary 1905, by Lydia S. Godfrey.

Reprinted by Popular Demand: Some Publishing Patterns in the Street & Smith Dime Novels, by J. Randolph Cox. April 4, 8:30 to 10:00 a.m.

The Dime Novel's Creeping Liberalism; or, A Northern View of Southern Ethics, by J. B. Dobkin.

The Civil War in Dime Novels: a Bibliographic Review, by Edward T. LeBlanc. April 4, 10:30 to Noon.

Buckskin Sam's Portrayal of Texas in Beadle Dime Novels, by James L. Evans.

Preservation Microfilming of Hess Collection Dime Novels, by Suzanna Moody, April 4, 1:30 to 3:00 p.m.

The Portrayal of the South in the Elsie Dinsmore Series Books, 1867-1900, by Elizabeth S. Frank.

The Bobbsey Twins, 1904, 1950 and 1961, by Deidre Johnson. April 5, 8:30 to 10:00 a.m.

Both the Washington Post and the London Times gave "The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr., by Gary Scharnhorst rave reviews.

The Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 42 "American Writers for Children Before 1900" has a biography of Horatio Alger, Jr., with full disclosure of the Mayes hoax. (Copy sent in by Jack Bales.)

LOOKING FOR OFFERS

Leo Edwards

THE MONKEY'S PAW, book exc. (owner's name on fly leaf) good dj.

Victor Appleton

TOM SWIFT & HIS GIANT MAGNET, TAN EDITION, G&D, book exc. (owner's name) good dj.

TOM SWIFT & HIS OCEAN AIRPORT, Spine is slightly faded otherwise very good (no dj), (owner's name) G&D in orange covers.

Clarence Budington Kelland

CATTY ATKINS, Harper edition, green decorated cover, g to vg.

Thomson Burtis

REX LEE FLYING DETECTIVE, G&D, green covers, probably first edition, no dj. vg to exc.

James Willard Schultz

ALDER GULCH GOLD, Houghton, Mifflin Co. 1931 dated title page, vg. dj. fair to good.

A. Hyatt Verrill

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